

City unveils safer, 'greener' sidewalk

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Just a couple of months ago, Marriner Merrill and his family couldn't walk down a certain Grove Street sidewalk without worrying about overgrown trees, broken concrete or a treacherous slope.

"There were just pieces of sidewalk there," said Merrill, who with his wife, Christine, have three young children. "You couldn't even walk on it."

The Merrills no longer have to worry about that stretch of sidewalk from 14th to 15th streets on



Thomas Maxfield/Journal & Courier

the south side of Grove.

On Friday, city officials unveiled a \$112,000 replacement sidewalk during a ribbon-cutting ceremony in the Merrills' house. The ceremony was held indoors due to rain.

The new sidewalk — complete

with wooden safety rails and a plantable retaining wall — replaces one of the worst stretches of sidewalk in the Valley Center Neighborhood, said John Lewandowski, president of the neighborhood association.

"That side of Grove Street was a no-go zone," he said.

The project, funded with federal Community Development Block Grant money, is an exercise in green engineering, said Brian Bugajski of the city's development office.

The plantable retaining wall

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By Jamie Lynn Chevillet/Journal & Courier

The completed Grove Street Sidewalk and Plantable Retaining Wall Project was unveiled on Friday

SIDEWALK

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will bloom in the spring with native plants and flowers, which will soak up stormwater runoff, he said.

A stormwater drain was installed with the project to enhance that effort.

The rails, which were installed to meet a state code requiring safety equipment along sidewalks next to dropoffs, were made with eco-friendly wood, he said.

Old stones and debris excavated during the demolition of the old sidewalk will



Allen Jacobsen said old stones and debris from the demolition will be used in future projects.

be used in projects involving city parks, said Allen Jacobsen, an engineer with contractor Hannum, Wagle and Cline.

Lewandowski, the neighborhood association president, said he's pleased with the look and function of the new infrastructure.

"Now people can walk there and feel safe, and we're thrilled," he said.